

No. 2.

ADDRESSES ON THE SCRIPTURES.

THE

Wrestling with Jacob.

30th THOUSAND.

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ADDRESS ON THE SCRIPTURES

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THE WRESTLING WITH JACOB.

GENESIS XXXII.

THAT portion of the singular history of Jacob which is contained in this chapter, and which relates to the wrestling of a man with him, is one full of beauty, instruction, and deep spiritual significance.

It seems somewhat remarkable that most biblical commentators should have so overlooked the true teaching of this most interesting passage, attributing a sense to it that not only mars the beauty of the passage, but is altogether at variance with the true character of Jacob. And this has arisen from the singular mistake in taking the converse of the scriptural expression, instead of the Word of God as it stands. Hence it is that Jacob is generally represented as wrestling *with* an angel, and *prevailing*, and therefore he is held up as an example of the efficacy of importunate prayer in gaining its reward. But Scripture affirms that *a man wrestled with Jacob, and prevailed not*,—the very opposite to the view taken by commentators in general. Jacob wrestling with a man, and a man wrestling with Jacob, are two totally different things; in the former case Jacob tries to overcome the man, in the latter case the man tries to overcome Jacob.*

The whole history of Jacob is wonderful, show-

* See *Notes on Genesis*, etc., by C. H. M., an admirable (yet not infallible) work of deep spiritual research, and most useful to every Student of the Word of God. The whole history of Jacob is noticed in this work, with views on this portion of it similar to those above.

ing on the one hand the purpose of God's sovereign grace, and on the other, an energetic, cunning, deceitful character—human nature at its worst; and yet this was the man that the Lord loved (see *Rom. ix. 11-13*). Well may we say with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (*Rom. xi. 33*).

The more depraved a man is, the more does God's grace shine in his deliverance from condemnation: that wonderful verse—"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel" (*Numbers xxiii. 21*), is the forerunner of those blessed truths, bringing rest and peace to the sinner's soul, through the perfect sacrifice of Christ. "There is therefore now NO CONDEMNATION to them which are in Christ Jesus" (*Romans viii. 1*). "And by Him, all that believe are justified from ALL THINGS, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (*Acts xiii. 39*). "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. . . In whom also after that ye believed, ye were SEALED with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," etc. (*Eph. i. 3-14*). What a feast to the poor sinner's soul are these verses, when received into the heart by faith with all humility!

Let it be understood clearly that the above quotations show the exceeding grace of God; and that although He does not see sin *on* the believer (for his sins were laid on Christ on the cross) He does see sin *in* the believer, for he sins daily and hourly, and it is these sins that we have to confess to God,

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that our communion and joy in Him may not be
 broken. Neglected confession soon brings darkness
 of soul and absence of spiritual communion. When-
 ever we sin, we leave the privileges under the law
 of liberty, and enter into bondage, "servants of
 sin" (*Romans* vi. 16). When we confess our sins
 to our Father, we are *set free from* this bondage, and
 are brought again into the freedom of children
 walking in communion with their Father. The
 faithfulness and justice of God is also mentioned in
 this passage (1 *John* i. 9), inasmuch as remission of
 sins was promised by God through CHRIST, and "He
 is faithful that promised"; also CHRIST having
 borne our sins on the cross has fully satisfied God's
 justice for ever. The Greek word, which is render-
 ed in this passage by our English word "*forgive*",
 has a secondary sense attached to it; it also means
 "*to set free from an accusation*"; thus, whenever a child
 of God sins in his daily life, the devil is ever ready
 to accuse him before God (*Revelation* xii. 10). And
 this accusation God sets his child free from when
 he confesses his sin to Him, and so restores free-
 dom and communion.

Up to the time of the Angel's wrestling, Jacob
 had no true faith in God; he had made prayer to
 God, and then trusted in his own means and plans.
 This unbelief is specially shown in *chapter xxviii.*,
 where, after the gracious promises made to him by
 God (*verse* 15), Jacob makes a vow to God begin-
 ning with an "If", which casts a doubt on the pro-
 mises just given to him. This vow bespeaks the
 worldly character of Jacob; it is as it were a bar-

gain with the Almighty, that if God would give to Jacob all that he required *in this world*, then Jacob would promise that the LORD should be his God!!! (*verses 20, 21*). How presuming on God's gracious love, mercy, and forbearance, is the ignorance of the unconverted man.

The angels of God meeting Jacob do not seem to have given him more confidence in God's dealings with him and protection of him; Jacob is fearful of Esau, and with good reason, after his conduct in *chapter xxvii.*; but now, after the promises of God, he sends to his brother Esau in a servile tone of address, very unlike that of a brother, thinking to appease him by a semblance of humility (*verse 4*), "My lord Esau", and "Thy servant Jacob". On hearing of his approach, Jacob begins to plan and scheme as he considers for the best, being "greatly afraid and distressed", so "he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, if Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape" (*verses 7, 8*). Having taken his own counsel, he prays to God pleading His covenant (*chapter xxviii. 13*), His command (*chapter xxxi. 3*), His mercies and His promises (*chapter xxviii. 13-15*). Jacob's prayer is excellent in its basis, but was it offered in true faith? Surely not, for immediately it is offered he returns to his own plans again, to try and avert that which he has just asked God to do for him. Jacob now puts his faith in the success of his present (*verse 20*)!! "For he said, I WILL APPEASE HIM with the

present that goeth before me ; " he thus distinctly admits that he was really trusting to his own counsel and wisdom for deliverance, and did not depend upon any answer that God might give to the prayer that he had but just offered up. This is not the mark of the true child of faith, who really places his whole trust in a faithful God. How unnecessary all this arrangement was, is shown in *chapter xxxiii.*

4. God was faithful to His promise,—He had already appeased Esau.

We now come to the most interesting part of the thirty-second chapter,—the wrestling: " And Jacob was left alone ; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." When Jacob was left alone, separated from everything that he prized on earth, then the Lord meets him ! When God has purposes of mercy towards a sinner, He often separates him *from* and strips him *of* earthly idols first, so that his whole heart may bow in submission to His will. And note especially that *The Man* wrestled with Jacob ; this man is shown to be Christ in *Hosea xii. 5.* What a wrestling was this of the strivings of spiritual influences with the carnal nature of Jacob ? (see *Ephesians vi. 12.*)

But was his natural character one that was likely to be influenced without special power from on high ? His deceit and cunning, his wealth, and position of power as a prince among men, all tended to foster pride and prevent his yielding his heart and will to the gentle wrestling of the Lord. But Jacob was one chosen of the Lord : the foreknowledge of God pierced the future. Now was the Lord's time to

make Jacob willing, now was the time of His power—(*Psalms* cx. 3)—for in *verse* 25 it is written that “When he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.”

What is the THIGH a type of? If we look back to Abraham we find that the thigh signified a point of honour: “Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and I will make thee swear by the Lord”, etc. (*Genesis* xxiv. 2, 3). If we turn to the *Psalms*, we find it signifies a point of strength: “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty” (*Psalms* xlv. 3), and for this reason to smite on the thigh is a token of humility—“Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth” (*Jeremiah* xxxi. 19). Among the Hebrew, Greek, Persian, and other nations, smiting on the thigh was a mode of expressing grief and indignation; smiting the point of strength also indicates helplessness. Again, we find the thigh signifies a point of dignity and power: “And He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (*Revelation* xix. 16).

What, then, does this putting out of joint of Jacob’s thigh typify? Surely this beautifully sets forth *the humbling of Jacob*; his pride of position, power, and dignity, is brought low; the Lord reveals him to himself, and Jacob sees nothing now but his own

foolishness and helplessness without the Lord—as also Job did, when God revealed Himself to him: he exclaimed—“I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (*Job* xlii. 5, 6). It is at this moment that the Lord says—“LET ME GO”. And for what reason was this but to stimulate Jacob to supplicate a blessing from Him?

So God says—“I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, TO DO IT FOR THEM” (*Ezekiel* xxxvi. 37); and again, Jesus, in the journey to Emmaus, “made as though He would have gone further” (*Luke* xxiv. 28), and this was simply to make the two disciples *ask* Jesus to abide with them. It is written—“Ask, and it SHALL be given you; seek, and ye SHALL find; knock, and it SHALL be opened unto you” (*Luke* xi. 9). Again, “Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, BELIEVE THAT YE RECEIVE THEM, and ye shall have them” (*Mark* xi. 24). Note also those precious verses in *Ephesians* i. 17–23. If believers had more faith in pleading with God with His own Word and promises, what might they not accomplish: the prayer of the poor Jew may ever be on our lips, “Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief” (*Mark* ix. 24).

Jacob, being humbled, and finding now utter nothingness and helplessness in himself—his thigh being out of joint—sees his *necessity* for seeking strength from the Lord, and says, “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me” (*verse* 26). He

clings now to the Lord, his only hope; in what manner, we find thus recited—"Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him" (*Hosea* xii. 4). Now Jacob prevailed, for the Lord loves to be *constrained to bless* by the importunity of the prayers of those who earnestly seek blessing from a deep sense of their want of it; read those instances full of instruction, where continued earnest prayer gains its object, narrated in *Matthew* xv. 22-28; *Luke* xi. 5-8.

The earnestness of Jacob's prayer (for this indeed was prayer from the heart) now causes the Lord to tarry, and in *verse* 27, He asks Jacob his name, "And he said, JACOB". What a simple answer, but what volumes did it imply! What is the meaning of the word? A deceiver, a cheat, a supplanter!! In this one word is comprised Jacob's confession of sin; in this word is typified the whole of Jacob's previous character (see *chapter* xxvii. 15-24, especially). How tenderly, how graciously does the Angel now persuade Jacob to confess his true character so as to get a blessing; and this is just the mind of the Lord towards all sinners at this present time as it was in days of old (*Jeremiah* iii. 12-14; *Romans* x. 9, 10). What, then, is the result of this confession?—forgiveness, and peace with God,—the true conversion of Jacob! He is now raised from the bondage of the sinner to the liberty of the saint, and made a prince of God, and therefore henceforth to be called no longer Jacob, but ISRAEL (*verse* 28). His old name, typical of all evil, is now taken away: he gets a new name, and a marvellous change of

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position. So is it now the glorious privilege of every sinner who believes in Christ as his own Saviour, with the heart-grasp of a loving faith. He immediately becomes cleansed and forgiven; it is a *present* salvation, not a future one, as is written—“[The Father] who HATH delivered us from the power of darkness, and HATH translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; in whom we HAVE redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (*Colossians* i. 13, 14). “Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom,—priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever” (*Revelation* i. 5, 6). How wonderful, how gracious, how incomprehensible, save to those taught by the Spirit of God, are these words; but to such, how inexpressibly blessed!

And Jacob asked, “Tell me, I pray thee, thy name?” (*verse* 29). He does not at this moment get this question answered, but he does get a blessing. A parallel passage occurs in *Judges* xiii. 18, where Manoah asks the name of the Angel of the Lord. The answer then given was, that the name was *secret* or *wonderful*, showing that the Angel was the Lord Himself (see *Isaiah* ix. 6).

It is not always that the Lord reveals Himself when giving a blessing to a sinner's soul; *faith* is often *proved* before the *realization* of the truths of the Gospel is given, but which, when given, causes the soul to rejoice “with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 *Peter* i. 8). There are many who *pray for salvation*. This is a mistake. If they read God's

Word carefully, they will find that salvation is freely offered to *all who will take it*. The message is, "WHOSOEVER WILL, let him TAKE of the water of life FREELY" (*Revelation* xxii. 17). How can the Lord offer salvation more freely than this? And yet how often is a poor sinner told by Satan that salvation is offered only to those whom God elects? We do indeed read in God's Word that He has an elect people, saints, according to foreknowledge (1 *Peter* i. 2), but there is no such thing in God's Word as reprobation, or a people elected to be damned; for God says, "He is not willing that ANY should perish" (2 *Peter* iii. 9). Every soul in hell will find that it came there of its own act and will, but never find that God sent it there; Christ says, A man loses *his own* soul (*Matthew* xvi. 26). Similar truth regarding man's responsibility is taught in *Proverbs* viii. 36. God sent His Son Jesus to be a "propitiation for the sins of the WHOLE world" (1 *John* ii. 2). Jesus came a ransom for ALL (1 *Timothy* ii. 6), both Jews and Gentiles,—not for all the elect people of God only, as some false teachers would have it, thus adding to God's Word, against which God especially warns us (*Deuteronomy* xi. 32), etc.

Thus seeing that Jesus died, and by His shed blood He became a ransom for ALL, both the saved and unsaved, none need perish if they truly believe in Him (see 2 *Peter* ii. 1). God is even NOW BESEECHING us to be reconciled to Him (2 *Corinthians* v. 20). These are truths that God gives us, leaving no excuse for the sinner, who finds himself a lost soul. But how differently some men teach,

asserting that a sinner must *wait*, and remain willfully in sin, until God calls him; that he is unable to accept the free salvation of God without some fancied special message from Him, when He distinctly tells us in His Word that He commands *all men everywhere* to repent (*Acts xvii. 30*); and if a man believes not God's written message, neither would he believe though one rose from the dead (*Luke xvi. 31*). Such false teaching is pleasant to the natural mind of man, for it places responsibility on God; and puts away from themselves the duty of listening to and following the commands of God; so they continue in sin, waiting for a call from God; a sign, just like the Pharisees of old, spoken of in *Matthew xvi. 4*—"A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas"; the sign of Jonas being that of death and resurrection—a type of salvation through Christ. One of the most successful delusions of the devil is this, by which he tempts souls to put off to a future time the acceptance of God's freely offered salvation. Others again teach poor sinners that salvation is a state that comes by degrees, and so, by little and little, we become better and better; and so at last we may attain to such a state of faith in Christ, and good works for Christ, that they may win eternal life. The Lord's own children are often robbed of peace by listening to the subtle whispering of the evil one, rather than faithfully believing God's own word.

To pray that we may *feel* that we are saved, before we have truly believed, is another way of wish-

ing to be saved without faith. True faith in God's promises must come first: *assurance of salvation* is the reward of true and steadfast faith. Many weak timid believers will be saved, who never had assurance. There are some who think it *presumption* to feel assured of eternal life. I would ask such whether it is not *far more* presumptuous to *disbelieve* God's Word, and so make Him a liar. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son" (1 *John* v. 10). I have even known a minister tell dying people that he would rather they did *not* feel sure of salvation!!! This was only another way of telling them that it was better to doubt God's Word! What does Paul say of his assurance—"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (*Romans* viii. 38, 39),—a beautiful chapter of blessed comfort to believers, beginning with *no condemnation*, and ending with *no separation*! And again, what does John say?—"These things have I written to you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life" (1 *John* v. 13). Others, and many there are such, who having been brought up as those under the law, are trying to *do their best* to obtain and work out their own salvation, as under the Jewish dispensation: by keeping (as they imagine)

the ten commandments, they have a sort of hope that may be considered righteous in God's sight. They do not read God's Word for themselves, and understand that "Christ is the END of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (*Romans* x. 4), that they are "dead in trespasses and sins" (*Ephesians* ii. 1), and can therefore neither *do* nor *think* any good thing of themselves (*Genesis* vi. 5), and, until they are born again, cannot obtain salvation (*John* iii. 3). They do not see that they have nothing TO DO for salvation except BELIEVE GOD'S WORD (*John* iii. 16), etc., and that immediately they do so they HAVE everlasting life.

Having thus by simple faith in God obtained life, then is the time for them to work out the salvation which they have thus obtained (*Philippians* ii. 12, 13), by showing openly in their walk through life that they bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, and are able to overcome the works of the flesh (*Galatians* v. 19-25); thus proving the reality of their faith by their works (*James* ii. 14-18). Oh that people would study and read God's Word, with prayer for the Holy Spirit to instruct them, rather than so continually trust to man's teaching, remembering the words of God Himself in 1 *John* ii. 20, 27, "Ye need not that any MAN teach you", etc.; yet the greater portion, rather than search for themselves, they lean upon, and so are often led away by the commentaries of so-called "learned divines", who are constantly considered as infallible expositors of the Word of God, forgetting that power of intellect is not required for this purpose, but the

understanding heart, that is taught by the Holy Spirit, and walking in close communion with God. There have been many such writers who have not been even converted while thus pretending to explain Scripture, a task quite out of their power, however otherwise learned they may be (see 1 *Corinthians* iii. 11-16). Readers of God's Word need to consider thoroughly this passage of Scripture, and to note its important bearing on those opinions of doctrinal teaching often put forward with much assurance by unconverted persons professing much religiousness, or even in the position of ministers to congregations. From this passage of Scripture it will be seen now how impossible it is for such to give any opinion as to what is the truth of the Word of God. Let us not forget the word in 2 *Timothy* iii. 7, written of these last days of those who have "the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof", such are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth". Yet commentaries are often very useful for giving historical facts and meanings of words, and also oriental customs, etc., information requiring research apart from spiritual teaching; but, nevertheless, in these latter days, while there is much precious truth to be found written by dear children of God in some such commentaries, and also other various publications, there is also oftentimes to be found much that is not truth, and, occasionally, radical errors, most pernicious and misleading, mixed up with, and side by side with truth, making it of special consequence to "search the Scriptures, and see if these things

be so " (*Acts* xvii. 11), and so "prove all things", otherwise, we may be led to believe false teachings and "traditions of men", against which we are so specially warned in *Colossians* ii. 4, 8, 16, 18-23.

From *verse* 30 it is evident that the Lord did in the end reveal Himself to Jacob, as shown by the concluding sentence. It was a received opinion of these times when occasionally the Lord appeared to man, that it was impossible to see God and live. So Manoah says, "We shall surely die, because we have seen God" (*Judges* xiii. 22), etc. But this revelation of the Lord to Jacob was not only temporal, but eternal preservation. So with sinners. God generally (for His ways are not limited) shows the sinner to himself, his sinfulness, his danger, his helplessness, his need of a Saviour; he puts his thigh out of joint; and then, when he cries from his heart, 'Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief', the revelation of God will come to his soul; his life will also be 'preserved', and he will find the peace of God that passeth understanding.

It was excellent advice of a Scotch minister, who, in speaking to a poor ignorant girl, told her to pray to God thus:—"O God, show me *myself*;" and some little time after, when he saw her again, and that prayer had been answered, and the poor girl was in sad mental distress at the sight of her corrupt and sinful state by nature, he gave her another prayer, as simple and as short "O God, show me *Thyself*". This prayer was also answered, and she found Christ to be indeed *her* Saviour, and obtained peace. The first prayer led to her *conviction*, the second to *conversion*.

Jacob having seen God, "the sun rose upon him and he halted on his thigh" (*verse 30, 31*).

A beautiful ending of the wrestling is this. After the night has passed, the time of trial, affliction, chastening, purging, *the time of humbling*, supplication, and confession; then comes blessing and honour; the Sun of Righteousness rises upon Jacob's heart—that blessed realization of his spiritual communion with God, seeing the Lord by spiritual discernment, which only God's Holy Spirit can give,—here was blessing and joy. And here also Jacob finds peace, for 'he halted upon his thigh'; he found rest in that he was now humbled, and was brought into submission to the will of God. Lowly, waiting, and sitting at the feet of Jesus, is the only place where we shall find rest, peace, sunshine, and joy. "But unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in His wings" (*Malachi iv. 2*). The more we see of the unsearchable riches of Christ, the more spiritual communion we have with God, the more we realize our high position as *one with Christ*, "members of His body", so much the more shall we see our own utter emptiness and unworthiness, as Job did (*chap. xlii. 5, 6*), and therefore shall we more truly see the necessity of following these precepts contained in *Colossians iii. 1-17*, keeping dead this old man that is still in us, and crucifying it continually, so that we may live the life of Christ that is in us (*Galatians ii. 20*), separating ourselves from everything that is evil, for "we are the temples of the living God" (*2 Corinthians vi. 14-18; vii. 1, etc.*).

What glorious rest it is for those believers who can realize these wonderful truths uttered by our Saviour, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, **HATH EVERLASTING LIFE**, and shall not come into condemnation; but **IS PASSED** from death unto life" (*John* iv. 24). Also, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall **NEVER** perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (*John* x. 27, 28). So also by Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, **RESERVED** in heaven for you, who are **KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 *Peter* i. 3-7).

But this peace, joy and rest, will only be found at the feet of Jesus,—entire separation from every unclean thing, entire coming out from all the follies, vanities, worldliness, lust of the flesh, pride of life, every appearance of evil, and setting our affections on things above, daily "washing our feet" by the

"water of the word". If we really follow God's Word, we cannot have any friendship with the WORLD, under any excuse whatever: IN IT, as witnesses of the truth, and of Jesus—as "living epistles" read of all men, but not OF IT. (Read carefully *John* xiii. 10, *Ephesians* v. 26, *2 Corinthians* v. 14-21, *James* iv. 4, and *2 Timothy* iii. 1-5).

Then it is that "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever" (*Isaiah* xxxii. 17).

F.B.

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I AM NOW A CHILD OF GOD.**

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ZION AND BABYLON.**

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